

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 2

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 117

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 2—Relative to the full benefits of Filipino–American veterans of the United States Armed Forces.

[Filed with Secretary of State September 12, 2005.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

AJR 2, Evans. Full benefits of Filipino veterans of the United States Armed Forces.

This measure would memorialize the President and the Congress of the United States to honor the contributions of Filipino-American war veterans and direct the federal government to immediately pay promised veterans’ benefits as the first order of business of the 109th Congress.

WHEREAS, On July 26, 1941, when the Philippines were under the sovereignty of the United States, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, pursuant to the Philippines’ Independence Act, issued an Executive order that called all organized military forces of the Philippines into the service of the United States; and

WHEREAS, President Roosevelt’s Executive order enabled over 200,000 Filipino soldiers to be inducted into the United States Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE); and

WHEREAS, On December 8, 1941, just 10 hours after Japan attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor, Japan bombed United States military bases located in the Philippines and consequently brought the Filipino people into World War II; and

WHEREAS, On March 27, 1942, the United States Congress passed Title 8 of the Second War Powers Act, which granted noncitizens who served in the United States Armed Forces during the war United States citizenship status and subsequently provided every member of the USAFFE, certain individuals who served in the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, and certain Philippine Scouts equal treatment under the law as provided by the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution; and

WHEREAS, On April 9, 1942, the United States surrendered the Philippines to Japan which led 75,000 USAFFE, Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, Philippine scouts, and other soldiers on the Bataan Death March, whereby nearly 10,000 Filipino soldiers perished in route to internment; and

WHEREAS, On September 2, 1945, Japan surrendered the Philippines back to the United States and effectively ended World War II on the islands of the Philippines; and

WHEREAS, Despite the promise to provide citizenship status and equal protection under the 14th Amendment, in November 1945, the United States State Department and the United States Immigration and Naturalization Services placed a moratorium on all applications for naturalization by Filipino war veterans; and

WHEREAS, One month after the start of the moratorium, Congress passed the Rescissions Act of 1946, which proclaimed that the service of the Filipino veterans in World War II who served under President Roosevelt's Executive order were no longer deemed to have been active military, naval, or air service for the purposes of any law of the United States; and

WHEREAS, In October 1990, nearly 45 years after the passage of the Rescissions Act, the Congress passed and President George H.W. Bush signed into law, the 1990 Immigration and Naturalization Act which finally granted United States citizenship status to all Filipino veterans; and

WHEREAS, Despite being granted citizenship status, surviving Filipino-American veterans have not been provided equal treatment, recognition, or benefits for their service; and

WHEREAS, As of September 2004, the number of surviving Filipino-American veterans was approximately 28,000 (8,000 of whom live in the United States) with a large population living in California; however, this total is less than one-half of Filipino-American veterans estimated to be living just four years ago and the numbers continue to decline rapidly as nearly all of the veterans are in their 70s and 80s; and

WHEREAS, Many of these veterans are disabled, low income, and in desperate need of existing services available to other veterans and that were promised to them approximately 60 years ago; and

WHEREAS, These Filipino-American veterans served the United States during World War II and came to our aid in a time of need and the failure to pay these benefits reflects poorly on the honor of our country; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of California, jointly, That the Legislature of the State of California memorializes the President and the Congress of the United States to honor the contributions of our Filipino-American veterans and direct the federal government to immediately pay them the veteran's benefits as promised as the first order of business when the 109th Congress convenes in January 2005; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the President of the United States, to the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and to each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress of the United States.